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**CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY OF WALNUT CREEK
NAMED “BEST OF AMERICA” BY
READER’S DIGEST MAGAZINE**

Walnut Creek, CA (May 9, 2005) – The California Symphony has been named “Best of America” by the editors of *Reader’s Digest* magazine. The magazine is devoting the May 2005 issue to the BEST OF AMERICA highlighting the very best America has to offer — from art to science — literature to music.

The editorial team of *Reader’s Digest* scoured the country to compile the second annual “America’s 100 Best” issue, naming the 100 best people, places, ideas and innovations found only in America. After speaking to hundreds of experts and ordinary folk, the editors chose the California Symphony of Walnut Creek as the Best Symphony Orchestra.

"All of us at the California Symphony are very proud to be named America's Best Symphony Orchestra," said Music Director Barry Jekowsky. "I am especially pleased to be singled out by Readers Digest for our unique artistic and educational programs which have distinguished us from other American Orchestras. Since the founding of the California Symphony we have committed ourselves to furthering the performance of American Music and nurturing young American Composers as well as prodigiously gifted young artists. This award should be an inspiration to those of us working hard to clearly define the purpose and potential of American Symphony Orchestras. The California Symphony believes strongly in the principle of honoring the past, celebrating the present and imagining the future!"

The California Symphony’s 2005-2006 Season will continue to impress featuring world-class guest appearances, provocative music selections and virtuoso performances — a schedule that underscores why this Symphony received this honor.

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“Our aim with this issue is to spotlight hidden treasures, great products, cool trends and inspiring stories that show what’s extraordinary about this country,” said *Reader’s Digest* Editor-in-Chief Jackie Leo. “Last year was the first time we attempted such an ambitious undertaking and we clearly struck a chord with readers, making this one of our bestsellers.”

The Symphony’s 19th Season is sure to get even more attention. Highlights include world-premiere works from the California Symphony’s Young American Composers-in-Residence, featured artists such as the duo of violinist Chee-Yun and cellist Alisa Weilerstein, a program featuring a medley of American waltzes from Stephen Sondheim, Leonard Bernstein and Dimitri Tiomkin, and *Guitar Concerto* by Jon Anderson, former vocalist of the rock-art group Yes.

“There are surprises on every program; I’m confident that the exciting and unique themes of the 2005-2006 season will appeal to all audiences,” said Jekowsky. “Our desire at the California Symphony is to redefine and re-energize the symphony experience and make each concert feel like a special event.”

Below is the write-up that appears in the May issue of Reader's Digest:

BEST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

It may not have the cache of the New York Philharmonic or the Boston Pops, but the California Symphony of Walnut Creek, California, can stand proud. Founded in 1986 by Julliard-trained prodigy Barry Jekowsky, the symphony features works by American composers--and not just old, dead men--on every one of its programs. Its Young American Composer-in-Residence program commissions works from top new talents who vie for three-year gigs. Younger people, Jekowsky has learned, enjoy young composers--and like watching young musicians play. So the symphony gives pint-sized performers their first U.S. appearances--with prodigies like Sarah Chang, who made her professional debut with the symphony, going on to stardom. The symphony's been outgrowing its space and has begun dabbling in the Bay Area's larger venues. Proving that expanding audiences are sweet music indeed.

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About the California Symphony

Since 1986, the fully professional California Symphony has brought world-class music, renowned artists, innovative arrangements and award-winning composers to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Subscription Series performances by the California Symphony are held at the Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts, located at 1601 Civic Drive in Walnut Creek. Season Tickets, ranging from \$144 to \$225 for the four-concert series, and Flexible Symphony Passes priced at \$187, are now on sale for the 2005-2006 Season. Individual tickets range from \$20 for students to \$59 for premium seats. Contact the California Symphony at (925) 280-2490 for ticket information, or log on to www.californiasymphony.org.

About Reader's Digest

Reader's Digest reaches about 100 million readers worldwide each month. The magazine celebrates ordinary people doing extraordinary things, and delivers a compelling mix of humor, personal service and other human-interest stories. *Reader's Digest* is published in 19 languages and 48 editions worldwide.